

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 23, 2015
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2014-1147
1708 VISTA LANE**

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1939 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, rectangular-plan, side-gabled, rock-veneered house with a full-width inset porch on square wood posts and no railing; Colonial Revival-styled 8:8 and 6:6 frame windows.

RESEARCH

The house was built in 1939 by Frank Rundell, a prominent and prolific local builder and developer. The first occupants were renters, Everett G. and Helen Pratt, who lived here until 1940, when they purchased a house on McCallum Drive. Everett G. Pratt was a native of Colorado, and they had lived in Denver prior to moving to Austin in the late 1930s. He had a private practice. Dick and Eleanor Vaughan rented the house from 1940 until around 1944. The Vaughans had lived in Houston prior to moving to Austin, and Dick Vaughan was a staff correspondent for the Houston Press newspaper. Jerry and Virginia Knippa owned and occupied the house in the mid-1940s while Jerry Knippa was a supervisor for the State Department of Banking. The Knippa family lived here until around 1946, when they moved to San Antonio; Jerry Knippa became the president and manager of the Texas Savings and Loan Association. The house was then owned by a series of widows. Lucille Turner is listed as the owner in the late 1940s; Ruth Buell owned and occupied the house from the late 1940s until around 1958. She was the widow of Ralph Buell, who worked for the Texas Department of Public Safety. They had lived in Brownsville, Texas before moving to Austin.

From around 1958 until the early 1980s, the house was owned and occupied by Ruby McIntosh, the widow of Roy McIntosh, a field man for a real estate and loan company. The McIntosh family was from Abilene, and Ruby McIntosh had been an art teacher there at McMurry College as well as an artist, specializing, it seems, in floral paintings. A 1936 story in the Abilene (Texas) Morning Reporter-News informs that Mrs. McIntosh was honored by the Woman's Literary Club in Hamlin, Texas, where she exhibited her paintings, and presented one, "Calla lilies" to the Hut Memorial Library in Hamlin. She had taught art at McMurry College, and at the time of the newspaper article in 1936, she was a private art teacher. Some of her work was also displayed at the Elisabet Ney Museum in Austin in the 1930s as part of an exhibit of West Texas artists, as well as continuing to exhibit in Abilene – her "Spring blossoms" was noted in an Abilene newspaper article in 1947. She moved to Austin in 1957, and began teaching arts and crafts at the Texas School for the Deaf. Her son, Calvin, lived in Austin, and her daughter, Betty, lived in Colorado. She lived in this house until around 1981, when she moved to Colorado. She died in Colorado in 1988, and is buried next to her husband in Abilene.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house is beyond the bounds of any City survey.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Encourage the applicant to adaptively re-use this house if feasible. This is an exceptional example of Texas Colonial Revival from the late 1930s, built by a prominent local builder. The stone veneer and full-width front porch lend a unique Central Texas feel to this otherwise typical Colonial Revival house, and efforts to preserve the historic appearance of this house should be given full consideration. If adaptive re-use and additions are not feasible, then staff recommends completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center.

LOCATION MAP
